

A STRANGE YET GRACIOUS CHOICE

NO. 2600

A SERMON
 INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 11, 1898.
 DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“For the LORD has chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure.”
Psalm 135:4.

THIS is a Psalm of praise all through. It is to be sung to the high-sounding cymbals. There is not a low note anywhere; it is all robust, exhilarating, joyful. It is “Hallelujah!” from beginning to end and it did not seem possible to the psalmist that he could omit from it the high jubilant note of election, for if there is anything that makes believers’ hearts sing unto the Lord, it is the recollection that He has chosen them, and fixed His love upon them. “You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you,” is one of the best reasons in the world why we should adore the Lord with all our heart and mind and soul and strength. If the Lord has made us to be His people, we will indeed with joy and gladness declare Him to be our God. If He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, we will make such return to Him as we can, and bless Him with our loudest and sweetest music. Blessed be the Lord because He “has chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure.”

It may be said that this verse relates to the seed of Abraham. So it does; but please remember that everything which belonged to the seed of Abraham after the flesh belongs yet more to those who are the seed of Abraham according to the spirit. Indeed, there always was a peculiar blessing which never did come to those who were only born according to the flesh, for Ishmael received it not, neither did Esau enter into it. The line of inheritance is the line of promise, the line of the divine choice; and if you and I have believed in Jesus Christ, we are in that spiritual line. The mark of that line is faith; they that believe are of the seed of believing Abraham. His very name is “the father of the faithful;” and those that are full of faith—the faith-ful—are the true seed of Abraham. The covenant in its highest and best meaning is theirs; it was made with Abraham on their account. Therefore we shall take all there is in this verse to ourselves, if we are indeed God’s covenanted ones. If He has brought us into the bond of the covenant by a work of grace upon our hearts, and we are now one with that glorious promised Seed, the Lord Jesus Christ, then it is true of us, and of all who are like us in this respect, “The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure.”

I. The first thing which lies upon the very surface of our text is THE CHOICE; “The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself.”

This choice is a *divine* one. It is the Lord that has chosen Jacob, that very Lord, who made the heavens and the earth; Jehovah, in whose hands are all things. He has made the choice, and it is a very wonderful thing, though we speak of it as if it were a commonplace truth. Yet, if we dive into its depths, we shall see that it is truly marvelous that God should ever have chosen any of the fallen race of mankind. Once, it repented Him that He had made men upon the face of the earth, so sinful had they become; yet, knowing beforehand all about their wickedness, the Lord was pleased to make a choice of men. He might have chosen angels; but let it always stand as a wonderful instance of His mysterious sovereignty that He did not choose the fallen angels—no, not even one of them. Our Lord Jesus Christ “took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham.” Why was it that all the hosts of spiritual beings that fell with Lucifer are left in their fallen state without any hope of salvation, while God’s eternal election has fallen upon the sons of men? Why, indeed! We can never understand it, and can give no answer but this, “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.” The choice however was divine and let us not get away from that glorious truth. It will give you, believer, the highest joy to know that the Lord has chosen you, and that knowledge will be to you a source of great strength. It will also be one of the best rebukes to the devil. You remember how, when Joshua the High Priest was stand-

ing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan was standing at his right hand to resist him, the Lord said to the accuser, “The Lord rebuke you, O Satan; even the Lord that has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!” There is no slap in the face for the devil that is as painful to him as that declaration, “The Lord has chosen Jerusalem; He has elected His people; and you, O Satan, may do what you will, but you cannot change the choice of God! If He has chosen anyone, that man is of the conquering seed before whom you have begun to fall, as Haman fell before Mordecai, and you shall fall yet lower, for the Lord has promised to the godly that He will bruise Satan under their feet shortly.” God has chosen them; it is He that says it; and therefore let the full force of the blessed truth come to each believing heart, “I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you.” There is an infinite sweetness in that thought.

The choice, being divine, is also *sovereign*. About this point, we are not left to speculation, for Paul has told us that “the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calls,” it was said to their mother Rebecca, “The elder shall serve the younger.” The divine purpose was made in that case irrespective of character, for no character had been developed. If anyone says that it was made on account of character foreseen, I reply that there was no good character to foresee; but as far as Jacob is concerned, although grace did make him into a true patriarch and heir of the promise, yet by nature he was a very poor stick. As I read what he does, when his human nature is uppermost, I feel that there is nothing in him why any mortal man should choose him, and certainly there is no reason why God should do so. There is nothing foreseen about him except that God foresees that He will make him gracious, but that is not the reason why He makes him gracious. There is, at the back of it all, the reason that the Lord gave to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” I find such a stuttering and stammering about this great truth in these days that I mean to be all the more emphatic in preaching it, for I believe that this doctrine largely helps in producing that state of spirit into which God would have sinners brought so as to make them feel that they have no claim upon Him—no right to His mercy, and that, if He gives it, He gives it simply because He chooses to give it. The choice was made by that great King who has a right to do as He wills, and who exercises that right; and therefore the declaration stands in our text, “Jehovah has chosen Jacob unto Himself.”

So we have seen that the choice is divine and sovereign.

And, beloved, it is a most *gracious* choice. As I have already said, the more we look at the character of Jacob, the more we must discard all idea that he was chosen for what he was by nature. From his birth, he bore the name of a supplanter, and his brother Esau bitterly said, “Is not he rightly named Jacob (that is, a supplanter)? For he has supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he has taken away my blessing.” The expression really is in the original, “Is not he rightly named Jacob? For he has Jacobed me these two times.” He had supplanted his brother, put him out of his proper place; he was truly the father of all the Jews; and, though I will say nothing to their disparagement, yet at driving a bargain are they not the masters of us all? And such was Jacob from the very beginning; so, as God chose him, assuredly He chose him of His grace, and for no other reason than because He would do it. Election was not of works, certainly, in Jacob’s case; but of grace, and of grace alone.

And, putting all things together, was it not *a very wonderful thing* that the Lord should choose Jacob? There were other men upon the face of the earth of whom God might have made a nation, and from whom He might have formed the chosen seed. I do not suppose that, even after Abraham and Isaac had come to know the Lord, they were the only people in the world who knew Him. Doubtless, there were some scattered up and down, like Job, who, I should think, is but a sample of many others. It seems to me that, if we had been about to choose a man who should found a race, we should have said, “There, Job is the man, ‘perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.’” He was a right princely man; I sometimes think that he was the grandest of all men, when I see him sitting on a dung-hill, transforming it into a throne, and reigning there right royally, while he says, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” It was a noble saying of the man who cannot be said to be less than the very greatest of mankind. “You have heard of the patience of Job,” and all the world shall hear of it again and again while there are ears to hear and tongues to speak. And yet, though Job is chosen unto salvation, he is not the founder of a great race, it is not in his line that the promised Messiah is to be found, but “the Lord has chosen Jacob.” Ah, me! Why did He do it? When you have told me why He chose Jacob, I shall then try to find out why He chose me; and if I should find that out,

probably you will at the same time discover why He chose you. It is all a great mystery of grace and must be left with Him who does as He wills—not without reasons, mark you, but without reasons that are revealed to us. God never acts unreasonably; yet He does not find His reasons for acting in men, but within Himself, in the heart of His compassion, in the eternal counsels of His own will. Do not think that we are talking of God as we speak of men. A man, who has a strong will, and who carries it out as he pleases, is a very dangerous person; a despot, let him be never so gentle, is a terrible being; but God—the infinitely holy, the perfectly just, the supremely good—we may well leave everything with Him. It is not merely that we must do so, but it is the best and wisest course for us to do so. Even if we could “snatch from His hands the balance and the rod,” into what other hands could we put them? No; they must remain with Him, and we are glad it is so. To me the unlimited dominion of God is glorious. I want to have no constitutional monarchy upon the throne of heaven. No, let Jehovah do absolutely as He wills, for His will must be perfect justice, perfect goodness, perfect righteousness.

So we leave this first point, the choice: “The Lord has chosen Jacob.”

II. The second part of our subject is full of practical teaching, for it concerns THE REASON OR RESULT OF GOD’S CHOICE.

There are many persons who like to hear about God having chosen Jacob; but listen, dear friends, to the next words in our text: “The Lord has chosen Jacob *unto Himself.*” It does not say, “unto heaven”—“unto certain privileges”—“unto certain favors.” All that is quite true, but it does not say so here: “The Lord has chosen Jacob *unto Himself.*” Oh, what a blessed choice is this—to be chosen unto God! Then Jacob is not his own, for God has chosen him, “unto Himself.” Then Jacob does not belong to any man, for the Lord has chosen him “unto Himself.” Now Jacob must have no motives except such as he finds in God, he must have no aims for which he is to live but that he may glorify his God, for “the Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself.” So, my brother, if you are chosen by the Lord, you are chosen to be God’s man, picked out from the rest of mankind to be from henceforth no longer your own, or the world’s, or the devil’s, but to be God’s, and God’s alone.

“The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself,” first, *that Jacob might know Him.* While others knew not God, but paid reverence unto those that were no gods, Jacob was chosen that he might, while he slept at Bethel, see the mystic ladder by which he might climb to his God, and down which God might send the angels to him. Jacob must be taught about God, and Jacob’s seed must have committed unto them the oracles of God. The world lies in darkness, but there is a lamp in the house of Jacob. It is black midnight over Assyria, and Babylon and Egypt, but a star shines in the heavens for Jacob and his seed. O dear hearts, do you understand the great mysteries of which I am speaking? Do you know the Lord—the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit? Have you been taught of God? Are you among those to whom your neighbor need not say, “Know the Lord,” because you belong to the people of God who all know Him from the least even to the greatest? If so, happy indeed are you.

And, next, the Lord chose Jacob and his seed, *that they might keep His truth alive in the world*—that God’s revelation of Himself might be preserved by them against all comers. It is just so with Christians now; the Lord has put us in trust with the gospel. He has committed to His servants that wonderful treasure which we have “in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God, and not of us.” Still are we bound to earnestly “contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints;” and it is as much the duty of God’s people this day to guard His truth as it was the duty of the seed of Israel to preserve, in the midst of heathen darkness, what was known of the one living and true God. “The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself” that he may preserve His truth among the sons of men.

It was also committed to Jacob’s descendants to keep up the worship of God. They must offer the morning and the evening lamb; they must bring the bullocks and goats and birds for sacrifice; they must set up the tabernacle in the wilderness; they must build the temple; and there the praises of Jehovah must be sung by sweet songsters day and night. Nowhere else was God to be publicly worshipped with rites ordained by Himself except upon Mount Zion. And now, today, the pure worship of Jehovah is entrusted to His saints; nobody else can worship Him in spirit and in truth but those who have been quickened and made true by the Holy Spirit. There is no true worship of God under heaven except that which is rendered by His own people. Men may make their ceremonial as gorgeous as they please, with splendor of architecture and great show of millinery, with the sound of flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music; but, after all, there is no true worship except that which comes from hearts in which the Spirit of God dwells. So you see, dear friends, that, the maintenance of God’s worship in the world is still entrusted to His chosen.

And the Lord has chosen His people unto Himself, *that He may manifest His grace in them*. “In Judah is God known: His name is great in Israel. In Salem also is His tabernacle, and His dwelling place in Zion. There broke He the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle.” And it is in the midst of God’s own people that His grace is still revealed; there He breaks the arrows of sin, and there He scatters all the battalions of evil. “Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined;” and still, out of the hearts of His chosen people, out of the congregation of His faithful ones, does He shine forth, for the Lord is ever with those who are on His side, even with the humble hearts in which He deigns to dwell. But He is not with the ungodly, for they are far from Him by wicked works. Remember then, you who are chosen, that God has chosen you “unto Himself” that He may manifest His grace in you.

And, especially, God has chosen His people, *that He may commune with them*, that He may manifest Himself to them as He does not unto the world; that they may come near unto Him in Christ Jesus, and that He may lay bare the very secret of His heart to them. Here is a text to prove my assertion: “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant.” He makes His glory to pass before them, and to them He reveals His choicest secrets. Happy and blessed are the people of whom this sentence is true, “The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself.”

Now, dear friends, let the question go round among you—Am I one of the chosen seed? You can tell whether you are chosen of God by this test—Have you been chosen unto God? Can you say with Paul, “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus”? Are you the branded slaves of Jesus Christ, and yet His free men rejoicing in the liberty wherewith He makes His people free? Do you feel as if you were shut up to one course in life, so that you can say with Paul, “This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”? Are you torn away from all former ambitions? Have you a single eye unto God’s glory? Does your heart beat for this one objective, that you may live because Christ lives in you? Then the text describes you: “The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself.” Oh, what a thrill of delight these words may cause to pass through many even of those who think they have known the Lord for years! Come, my heart, it is all very well for your lips to have sung about God’s everlasting love; but have you been brought into communion and fellowship with Him? Do you feel and know that you are indeed the Lord’s? I fear that there are some, who profess and call themselves Christians, who live unto God in a very unsatisfactory, secondary sort of way, like a man I have heard of, who had a large farm, and then took another, which he called his “off-hand farm;” and there are some professors who have their business farm, or their pleasure farm, which is the chief matter with them, and their religion is a kind of an off-hand farm, and, sometimes, they think they will get a minister or a “priest” to be the bailiff, and see to it. My friend, I give you due notice that I will be no bailiff of such a farm, and I also warn you that you will never get anything worth having unless it is your home farm, and you make it the main concern of your life. God will never be put in second place; He must be everything or He will be nothing. “The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself.” O my dear friend, is it so with you? Or are you still living as if there were no God, or as if God did not demand your heart’s full allegiance?

III. Now I will pass on to notice, very briefly, in the third place, THE SEPARATION WHICH GROWS OUT OF THIS CHOICE: “The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure.”

Then, *He separates His people from the rest of mankind*. Though this is not expressed in the words of the text, it is the true sense of it. And the Lord has done so; He did so with Jacob—with Israel. He made a covenant with them; and a covenant with God always means separation from men. What a wonderful condition for a soul to be in—to be in covenant with God, and that covenant to run on these lines: “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments, and do them. And you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and you shall be My people, and I will be your God.” That covenant makes a clear division between the two seeds—the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent; it is one of the grandest distinctions between man and man. If you are in the covenant, beloved, you are on the right side of that happy and blessed line of demarcation.

Then, after the covenant with Jacob and Israel, came *the covenant heritage* which made another division, for the Lord gave the land of Canaan to the seed of Abraham and to the seed of Israel by a covenant of salt. And God has given to His spiritual Israel a covenant heritage; we are to possess all things in Christ, “who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption”—

everything we can desire; for all things are ours if we are Christ's. Ours is a glorious inheritance; we have everything that is necessary for this life, and also for the life to come. Even Canaan had its drawbacks; but we go to a land which in very deed flows with milk and honey, where the sun goes no more down, where there is no death, neither sorrow, nor sighing, a sweet land beyond the flood, the heavenly Canaan, which stands forever dressed in living green. Blessed are the eyes that can look from the top of Pisgah, and, "view the landscape over." But what a difference it makes between man and man that this one has a covenant heritage, and the other has none, for he sold it for a mess of pottage, and has no more to do with it!

Then came the broad distinction which all could see, namely, that of *redemption*, for the seed of Jacob had to be redeemed. They had come into bondage in Egypt, but with a high hand and an outstretched arm did the Lord bring them from there. Then the difference began to be visible. That night when the blood-mark was on the lintel and down the two side posts, Israel was distinct from Egypt. The blood had made the difference, for the Lord had said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." O dear hearers, have you had the blood-mark put upon you? Has the atoning sacrifice of Christ been laid home to your heart and conscience? This is the great distinction between man and man, the blood that makes atonement for the soul. The Lord has indeed manifested His choice of us when we have entered into the fullness of His great redemption.

Then came the going out of Egypt, which may be likened to *conversion*; the passage through the Red Sea, which sets forth *regeneration*; the dwelling in the wilderness, which is a type of *the life and experience of many believers*; the passing of the Jordan and the entering into Canaan, which should be a picture of *the joy of all who believe in Jesus*, for "we which have believed do enter into rest," and come into the land of promise. These things, which I have only mentioned in passing, made very grave distinctions between the people of Jehovah and all other nations, who looked upon them as a strange race dwelling alone, and not numbered among the ordinary nations of the earth.

This brings me again to the critical question—Has the Lord made any difference between you and the rest of mankind, dear hearers? Have you received any pledge of the covenant of grace? Do you know what redeeming love means? Have you been separated from the world? Have you heard the voice of God crying to you, "Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty"? Is the world a wilderness to you? Have you looked to the bronze serpent, and lived by the sight? Does the water from the rock follow you—that rock which is Christ? Do you feed on heavenly manna? Is the Lord in the midst of your camp? Is His glory manifested there? Do you delight to be led by His fiery cloudy pillar from day to day? All this will be the manifestation of the eternal separation which God made in His predestinating purpose: "The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself." He led Israel out into the wilderness that there He might speak to their hearts. He drew them away from men; He made them live solitary and alone, like eagles on the rock, that they might dwell there with Him, and have no strange god among them. Blessed are the people who enjoy this separation; but unhappy are the men and women who talk about election, and yet have never known the separation which stamps their election as being a matter of fact.

IV. Now I close with one more characteristic of the people of God, and that is, **THEIR ELEVATION**. This is clearly in the text: "The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself:" but in a moment He elevates Jacob, for He adds, "and Israel for His peculiar treasure."

The "supplanter" has grown into a prevailing prince. He took his brother by the heel, but now he has accomplished a grander feat than that; he has grasped the angel, and he has said, "I will not let You go, except You bless me." He supplanted Esau, but now, as a prince, he has prevailed with God, and seen Him face to face, and yet he has lived; and though he comes limping away from the wrestling, yet is he more than conqueror through Him that loved him. Yes, beloved, God's choice wonderfully elevates a man. He may be Jacob before, but he becomes Israel afterwards; has such an elevation as that taken place in *you*, my friend?

Then see, next, that *God elevated His choice in value*, for He compares Jacob to a "peculiar treasure." "Since you were precious in My sight"—oh, that is a wonderful word!—"precious in My sight," to be used by the God who says, "The silver and the gold are Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills."—"Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you." They are put to an honorable use, for the choicest treasures of kings that make up their regalia, are meant to be brought out on coronation days, and on other grand occasions when they bedeck themselves with all their pearls

and diamonds and stars and crowns. And such are the Lord's people, precious in His sight, "His peculiar treasure." And they are put to this use—to adorn His doctrine in all things—to be as the jewels of His crown—to be as the signet ring upon His finger—to be as precious stones upon His breastplate. God's people are everything to Him; there is nothing that you have, that you account rich or rare, that is anything to you in value in comparison with what God's people are to Him. His delight is in them; the pleasure which God has in His people is truly wonderful. He made the heavens and the earth, the stars and all things that be; and then He touched the world with His wondrous finger, and molded it into the thing of beauty which it is today; and it took Him six days to do it; and when He had done it, what happened? "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." But did God sing? No; He simply said, in plain prose, that it was very good; that is all He had to say about it. Ah, but when the time comes for the new creation, when He makes a true believer, when He forms His Church, the bride, the Lamb's wife, we read, "He will rejoice over you with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing." Think of God, the Everlasting Father, the Ever-blessed Son, and the Divine Spirit bursting out into singing; what a song must that be! I would like to hear the singing of the angels and of all the host redeemed with blood that stand in their white robes before the throne of the Most High; it must be such a song as mortal ears as yet have never heard. But, oh, to hear God sing—the great Father Himself with His holy hymn—the glorious Son with His sweet psalm—the Holy Spirit with His blessed song! We can scarcely imagine what it must be, but the expression shows how precious the Church must be to the Lord when He is said to rejoice over her with singing. As the love of a husband to his bride, such is the love of Christ to His people; otherwise the Song of Solomon means nothing at all, and is an idle book. As the love of a tender mother—and what can excel that?—such is the love of God to His people. Like as a mother comforts her children, even so shall the Lord God comfort you.

So, then, you see, dear friends, that the choice of God has lifted His people right up from all their former degradation, and made them precious in His sight, so that He Himself takes delight in them. Go home, then, and take delight in God. If He can and delight in you, much more may you delight in Him; and, as the Psalm from which our text is taken begins with, "Praise you the Lord," so now, you who know that you are chosen by Him, praise Him. And as the Psalm ends with "Praise you the Lord," you who love Him, you who have been loved by Him, continue to praise Him even till your last breath, gasp out a "Hallelujah!" as you pass into eternity.

The Lord be with you, beloved, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *PSALM 135.*

Verse 1. *Praise you the LORD.*

Or, "Hallelujah." "Hallelujah" is the keynote of it. So this is one of the Hallelujah Psalms, for so it begins; and if you look at the end, you will see that so it closes. There is "Hallelujah" again. The whole Psalm is shut in at the beginning and at the end with this which is both our duty and our delight: "Praise you the Lord."

1. *Praise you the name of the LORD;*

The character, the work, all that is revealed of God, is a subject for praise; and especially that wonderful and incommunicable name Jehovah—never mention it without praise: "Praise you the name of the Lord."

1. *Praise Him, O you servants of the LORD.*

Make it a part of your service. Praise Him because you are His servants. Praise Him because He accepts your service. You ought to be first in sounding His praises, therefore, "Praise Him, O you servants of the Lord."

2. *You that stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God,—*

You are permitted to dwell near Him. You have a standing and an abode, an office and a work, in the courts of the Lord's house; therefore take care that you begin the strain. Should not the King's courtiers praise Him? Praise Him, then, "you that stand in the courts of the house of our God,"—

3. *Praise the LORD; for the LORD is good:*

There is one excellent reason for praising Him, and you can never praise Him too much. He is so good that you can never extol Him to an exaggeration.

3. *Sing praises unto His name; for it is pleasant.*

That is, singing God's praises is pleasant; it is a pleasant duty, and the Lord's name is pleasant, or lovely. The very thought of God brings the sweetest emotions to every renewed heart; there is no pleasure in the world that exceeds that of devotion. As we sing praises unto the Lord, we shake off the cares of the world, we rise above its smoke and mists, and we get into the clearer atmosphere of communion with Him.

4. For the LORD has chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure.

There is something for you who are the Lord's chosen to sing about—

*“In songs of sublime adoration and praise,
You pilgrims to Zion who press,
Break forth, and extol the great Ancient of days,
His rich and distinguishing grace.”*

5. For I know that the LORD is great, and that our Lord is above all gods.

“I know it,” says the writer of the Psalm; “I know it by experience; I know it by observation; I am sure of it. There is no god like unto our God. He is a great Creator, a great Preserver, a great Redeemer, a great Friend, a great Helper. ‘I know that Jehovah is great, and that our Adonai is above all gods.’”

6. Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that He did in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.

The heathen divided out the universe into provinces, they had Jupiter to rule heaven and earth, and Neptune for the sea, and even today many sing, but, oh! How inaccurately, “Britannia rules the waves.” It is Jehovah, and no one else, that rules the waves, and the people on either land or sea. He is Lord everywhere, and whatever He pleases to do is done. He is no lackey to wait upon the free will of His creatures: “Whatsoever Jehovah pleased, that He did.”

7. He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth;

That is a very wonderful work; what millions of tons of water are every day turned into vapor, and caused to ascend from different regions of the earth to fall again afterwards in cheerful, refreshing rain! What should we do if this process were suspended? It is the very life-blood of the world.

7. He makes lightning for the rain;

It is said that the Bible was written to teach us religion, not science. That is very true, but the Bible never makes a mistake in its science; and I would rather agree with the old writers, who held that the Bible contained all science, than go with those who blasphemously pretend to correct the Holy Spirit, and to set Him right upon geology, and I know not what besides. In the long run, it shall be proved that the old Book beats all the scientists; and when they have made some wonderful discovery, it will turn out that it was all recorded here long before.

“He makes lightning for the rain.” There is an intimate connection between electricity and the formation of rain; and in the East this is very clear, for we are constantly reading in books of travel of heavy downpours of rain almost always accompanied by thunderstorms.

7. He brings the wind out of His treasures.

The wind never comes puffing around us according to some freak of its own; but “He brings the wind out of His treasures;” counting and spending it as men do their money, not suffering more wind to blow than is needed for the high purposes of His wise government. Let praise for this be given to the God of nature who is ruling over all, and always doing as He wills.

The psalmist goes on to show that the God of nature is also the God of His people:—

8. Who smote the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and beast.

It was God's own hand that did it. The firstborn of man and beast could not have died by accident all over the land of Egypt at the same hour of the night; but Jehovah thus punished the guilty nation. Had they not oppressed His firstborn? Had they not cruelly trampled on His people, and refused to listen to His Word? And when the time came for this last and heaviest blow, the Lord did but act in justice to them, and in mercy to His people.

9. Who sent tokens and wonders into the midst of you, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants.

“Tokens and wonders;”—not only prodigies which astounded the people, but “tokens” which taught them, for the plagues were directed against their deities, and large books might be written to show how every plague exposed the impotence of some one or other of the false gods which the Egyptians worshipped. Pharaoh and his servants were all involved in the sin, so they were all included in the punishment. How much better was it to be a servant of Jehovah than to be a servant of Pharaoh!

10. *Who smote great nations, and slew mighty kings;*

Two of them are mentioned, perhaps because they were two of the most powerful kings who blocked the road of Israel.

11-13. *Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan: and gave their land for an heritage, an heritage unto Israel His people. Your name, O LORD, endures forever;—*

He is the same Jehovah now as He ever was. Multitudes of people, nowadays, have made unto themselves new gods; they have imagined a new character for Jehovah altogether, and the God of the Old Testament is ignored and slandered; but not by His chosen people, they still cling to Him. The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob is not the God of the dead, but of the living; and that is true spiritually as well as naturally. Those who are spiritually dead refuse to own Him, and set up gods that they have imagined; but those who are quickened by His grace delight in Him, and glorify His name. Let this, beloved, be our joyful song, “Your name, O Lord, endures forever;—

13, 14. *And Your memorial, O LORD, throughout all generations. For the LORD will judge His people, and He will repent Himself concerning His servants.*

For they have their dark times, and are often in trouble through their sin. Then the Lord sends chastisement upon them, but when it has answered His purpose, He gladly enough withdraws it. How different are the idols of the heathen from our God!

15. *The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands.*

They can do no works, for they are themselves the result of the work of men. Their handiwork can be nothing, for they are the work of men’s hands.

16-18. *They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; neither is there any breath in their mouths. They that make them are like unto them: so is everyone that trusts in them.*

The original conveys the idea that those who make such gods grow to be like them, they are continually getting to be more and more like them. They become dumb, blind, deaf, dead, as they worship such idols as these.

19, 20. *Bless the LORD, O house of Israel: bless the LORD, O house of Aaron: bless the LORD, O house of Levi: you that fear the LORD, bless the LORD.*

All of you, whether you are of the house of Aaron or of the tribe of Levi, to whatever house or tribe you belong, bless the Lord; and if you are Gentiles, even though Abraham acknowledges you not, yet, “you that fear the Lord, bless the Lord.”

21. *Blessed be the LORD out of Zion, which dwells at Jerusalem.*

Our inmost hearts would bless Him. We cannot make Him more blessed than He is; we cannot add to His glory; but, oh! We do wish that everything we can do, everything that can be done to His honor, may be done.

21. *Praise you the LORD.*

That is, once again, “Hallelujah.” Oh, for the spirit of divine grace to set us praising God from the heart, and to keep us at that holy exercise all our days!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—219, 147, 231, AND THE DOXOLOGY.

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